

REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR KEVIN J. MCGUIRE  
CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
SYMPOSIUM  
18-22 AUGUST, 2003, 8:30-10:45,  
ALTE BRÜCKE CONFERENCE CENTRE,  
SWAKOPMUND

Honorable Prime Minister Gurirab,  
Honorable Nuuyoma, Governor of the Erongo Region,  
Her Worship, the Mayor of Swakopmund, Ms Haobes (pronounced *How-Bes*),  
Messrs Keulder, Tjaronda and Beukes from the Namibia Institute for  
Democracy,  
Members of grant-recipient organizations,  
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.....

It is an honor to address you today, at the opening of this important second symposium of the NID's Civil Society Development Program (CSDP) and to mark my Government's support for emerging community-based organizations in their conduct of advocacy activities at the local level.

Since the launch of this program and the first workshop last year in Swakopmund, when we welcomed the Embassy of the Netherlands as a partner in this venture, I have watched with great interest the progress of these civic groups that receive technical support and grants through NID. I have been informed about your efforts to speak on behalf of your members and to articulate their concerns to decision-makers and government representatives. I have also seen articles in the local media that reflect the activities that you have undertaken and that document some of your successes:

- Some of your organizations have advocated for the free flow of information at grass-roots level, have established community newsletters, have exposed instances of corruption in representative bodies, and have seen your elected leaders deal promptly and decisively with the culprits.
- One group is working closely with the Ministry of Prisons and Correctional Services around the procedures for rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners and has been lobbying for increased funding levels to support this process.

- Here in the Erongo region, a group of young Namibians, working together with the police, are showing that a collaborative community approach to addressing crime is more effective and helps to maintain law and order. This has provided a model that groups in other regions have started to replicate.
- Key inputs by one organization in the form of lobbying and submissions to Parliamentarians around the Domestic Violence Bill have resulted in changes to proposed legislation. This organization's work in educating the public around the issue has also been instrumental in enabling Namibians to address the problem with the seriousness it deserves.

Without question, in raising such concerns, existing linkages between citizens and their representatives at local, regional and national levels have been strengthened considerably, and useful new connections within communities have been established. Your organizations have come to be regarded as credible and competent bodies that may be entrusted with the task of representing local concerns and interests. Through the process, your overall organizational capacity and the prospects for continued, sustainable operations have been augmented significantly.

You are to be congratulated on your success, and for taking up issues that lie deep at the heart of some of the most remotely situated communities in the country. You have opened up channels of communication between citizens and authorities that might not have been used before in this way. You have also demonstrated that there are many opportunities available for Namibian citizens to link with their elected representatives, at all levels, even in out-of-the-way areas, far from the capital city and the most obvious seats of political power.

Through your various campaigns, you have taken up your role and responsibilities as citizens and given expression to your concerns in more proactive, constructive and effective ways. Importantly, we need to acknowledge that your government has been instrumental in providing the space required for this, and that governmental authorities are open to listening and responding to your submissions.

The support provided by NID has been invaluable. I would, therefore, also like to commend NID and the members of staff that have worked so tirelessly over the course of the last two years, in facilitating these developments. You

have traveled across the length and breadth of Namibia; consulted with regional governors, traditional and community leaders; and informed civic groups about the program. You have provided training on advocacy skills, project proposal writing, program implementation, and financial management, while monitoring activities for reporting purposes. It has been a tremendous task, but one you have performed well.

The United States Government, through USAID, has been a proud partner in CSDP, as well as in other democracy and governance interventions, such as in support of the Parliament. Whereas there was some uncertainty about whether USAID would be able to continue in Namibia past 2005, the planned program closeout date, I am pleased to say that the USAID program in Namibia has been extended to 2010, and a new program strategy for this period has just been approved by Washington.

It is important to understand why the U.S. decided to expand its partnership with Namibia :

- First, Namibia is emerging as an important model within the African continent for its commitment to democracy and the rule of law, its adherence to a free-market path, and for the investment made in its people through education and health – that is definitely a model worth supporting;
- Secondly, the USAID program, including the Civil Society Development Program, has been performing well and has demonstrated significant results, so we can expect that the continued program will likely expand on this success;
- And third, my government recognizes that significant development challenges remain, and as such, continued external support is required to ensure Namibia succeeds on its path to sustainable development.

There is one particular challenge confronting Namibia, and all of Africa, that the U.S. Government has committed to stand with you, shoulder-to-shoulder, in addressing. In the face of the growing threat of HIV/AIDS, President Bush has established two initiatives, totaling 15 billion U.S. dollars, which will provide the resources to stop the spread and impacts of the disease. The first initiative, under which Namibia will benefit starting this year, tackles mother-to-child transmission. The second, the Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS, is expected to benefit Namibia beginning next year. These exceptional increases

in funding will allow USAID, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, to greatly expand support for prevention, care, support and treatment.

I should add, also, that the U.S. has made fight against HIV/AIDS an all-out effort, involving not only USAID and CDC, but other U.S. Government partners as well. This includes the Peace Corps, with its network of Volunteers; the Department of Defense, which helped build the Multi-Purpose Center in Walvis Bay and which will contribute to the extension of a similar center in Ongwediva; the Department of Agriculture, which provided over 3 million U.S. dollars in wheat, most of the proceeds of which are financing HIV/AIDS programs of the Ministry of Health and Social Services; and the Department of Labor, which is funding a 1 million U.S. dollar HIV/AIDS workplace program.

I would encourage you to incorporate HIV/AIDS prevention and support messages in all your program efforts. Namibia, and the rest of Africa, will overcome this great epidemic, but it also faces other challenges.

Only through increased prosperity can the expectations of the Namibian people be realized. In support of this goal, the U.S. Congress has put in place two sets of legislation, called the Africa Growth and Opportunities Acts I and II, which provide preferential trade status for Namibia and many other African countries. To date, as a result of AGOA, 200 million U.S. dollars in investment has been attracted to Namibia, and 4,200 jobs have been created – 6,000 additional jobs should be in place within the next year. Hopefully, this is just a beginning. Namibia has positioned itself for growth, and the U.S. is pleased to play a facilitative role in this regard.

The U.S. believes that Namibia's greatest hopes depend on the further consolidation of democracy. Despite the fact that direct USAID funding for the current phase of the CSDP has come to an end, additional monies for specific activity areas, such as integrity and civic and voter education, are planned to flow to organizations wanting to become engaged in collaborative partnerships and community-based programs around these issues. Your participation in these two key program areas will also serve to further strengthen the linkages you have established, expand the networks that have started to emerge, and further consolidate your organizational capacities.

The commitment you demonstrate to effective citizenship will encourage even more civic groups to put their concerns before their elected representatives. I would encourage you to take advantage of the various mechanisms and potent

new channels that are available increasingly through the USAID-supported Parliamentary Constituency Outreach program, both within the regions and through regional and local government authorities. NID is well aware of this program, and is well-placed to brief you on the possibilities.

By exercising your hard-won freedom and practicing the responsibilities of citizenship and self-government, you are helping to forge the culture that forms the foundation upon which strong democracies are built. You are helping to sustain the democratic ethos that provides meat to the institutional, procedural and legal bones that have been put in place. And you are also making a substantial and meaningful contribution towards the remarkable process of democratic transformation that has been taking place in Namibia over the last thirteen years.

In conclusion, let me then, once again, congratulate you on progress made so far and wish you well for your future endeavors in this democratic undertaking.

I will continue to watch your progress with much interest.

Thank you.